

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

TO AMEMBASSY ROME

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 8628

C O N F I D E N T I A L HELSINKI 1025

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINR, FI, IT

SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: AMBASSADOR TANELI KEKKONEN

REF: ROME 6797

1. TANELI KEKKONEN IS THE SON OF FINLAND'S LONG-TIME PRESEDENT URHO KEKKONEN. HE HAS A TWIN BROTHER, MATTI, WHO IS A SENIOR OFFICIAL IN THE FINNISH MINISTRY OF AGRICULTRUE. THEY ARE PRESIDNET KEKKONEN'S ONLY CHILDREN AND WERE BORN SEPTEMBER 4, 1928. TANELI TOOK A DEGREE IN POLITICAL SCIENCE FROM HELSINKI UNIVERSITY IN 1951 AND JOINED THE FOREIGN MINISTRY A YEAR LATER, PRESEUMABLY AFTER FULFILLING HIS MILITARY OBLIGATION.

2. TANELI KEKKONEN MARRIED BRITA FAGERHOLM (BORN JULY 30, 1937) IN 1952 AND THEY HAVE TWO CHILDREN: A BOY, TIMO KALEVA (BORN MAY 3, 1957), AND A GIRL, TEA-RIITA (BORN AUGUST 23, 1963). TANELI'S FATHER-IN-LAW IS KARL-AUGUST FAGERHOLM, A BARBER WHO BECAME THREE-TIME SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PRIME MINISTER OF FINLAND, SEVERAL-TIME SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT DURING HIS 36 YEARS AS AN MP, AND THE CANDIDATE URHO KEKKONEN DEFEATED BY ONE VOTE FOR THE PRESIDENCY IN 1956. KEKKONEN'S MARRIAGE WAS A LOVE MATCH ACROSS LINGUISTIC AND PARTY LINES AND, REPORTEDLY, NOT TO HIS FATHER'S LIKING. RELATIONS BETWEEN FAGERHOLM AND PRESIDENT KEKKONEN ARE STRAINED, EVEN TO THE PRESENT DAY, RESULTING NOT ONLY FROM THE BITTERNESS OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN, BUT ALSO FROM THE OVERTHROW OF FAGERHOLM'S LAST GOVERNMENT IN 1958. BACKGROUN ON FAGERHOLM IS PROVIDED PARTICULARLY
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BECAUSE HE SAID IN LENGTHY INTERVIEW LAST WEEK THAT

HE WOULD BE VISITING HIS DAUGHTER IN ROME IN NEAR FUTURE.

3. TANELI KEKKONEN'S FOREIGN MINISTRY CAREER BEGAN IN MOSCOW IN SEPTEMBER 1953. HE MOVED TO STOCKHOLM IN FEBRUARY 1956 AND RETURNED TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY IN AUGUST 1957 HE BEGAN HIS FIRST TOUR IN ROME IN MAY 1959 AND WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE FINNISH UN MISSION IN JULY 1961. AFTER ANOTHER TOUR IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY -- IN CHARGE OF UN AFFAIRS -- FROM JULY 1963 TO MAY 1965, KEKKONEN WAS ASSIGNED AS CHARGE D'AFFAIRES IN BELGRADE. HE WAS NAMED AMBASSADOR TO YUGOSLAVIA IN JANUARY 1966 AND SIDE-ACCREDITED TO ATHENS THE SAME MONTH. FROM JULY 1970 UNTIL HIS APPOINTMENT TO ROME IN MARCH 1975 HE WAS IN CHARGE OF NUMEROUS SPECIAL PROJECTS IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. MAY OF THESE PROJECTS INVOLVED TRADE AND OTHER NEGOTIATIONS WITH VARIOUS COMMUNIST COUNTRIES. HIS LAST TASK BEFORE GOING TO ROME WAS TO CONDUCT DISCUSSIONS IN NORTH KOREA CONCERNING PAYMENTS FOR A PAPER MILL ON WHICH THE KOREANS HAVE FALLEN BEHIND.

4. KEKKONEN IS NOT WELL-KNOWN TO THE PRESENT GENERATION AT THIS EMBASSY. HE HAS A REPUTATION FOR EXCESSIVE DRINKING, BUT IT IS NOT APPARENTLY SO SEVERE AS TO LIMIT HIS EFFECTIVENESS. PHYSICALLY HE RESEMBLES HIS MOTHER WHO DIED IN DECEMBER 1974 -- A QUIET, SENSITIVE, RETIRING PERSON, WELL-KNOWN IN HER OWN RIGHT AS AN AUTHOR. LIKE HIS MOTHER TANELI KEKKONEN IS BELOW AVERAGE HEIGHT, SPEAKS SOFTLY, AND CONVEYS AN IMPRESSION OF RETICENCE WHICH CONCEALS A SHARP SENSE OF HUMOR. HE IS QUITE INTERESTED IN THE ARTS. BOTH KEKKONEN AND HIS WIFE SPEAK ENGLISH REASONABLY WELL.

5. IF DEPARTMENT HAS FULLER ASSESSMENT OF KEKKONEN'S PERSONALITY AND OPINIONS ON FILE, PLEASE REPEAT TO ROME AND HELSINKI.
HOUSTON

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